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GLEANINGS FROM THE EMMONS COLLECTION OF
ETHNOLOGICAL SPECIMENS FROM ALASKA.

THE American Museum of Natural History at New York has recently purchased a very complete collection of ethnological specimens, collected by Lieutenant Emmons during a five years' stay in Alaska. It is of great value to the student of American folk-lore, as the collector has taken great pains to ascertain the meaning of the various implements, particularly of the carvings, and as he has recorded the traditions referring to them. The specimens were collected among the various tribes of the Tlingit, and an examination of the collection will amply repay the student and materially increase our knowledge of this remarkable nation.

Lieutenant Emmons's catalogue contains many incidental notes referring to folk-lore as well as information valuable to the ethnologist. The following interesting legend regarding the origin of witches was recorded by the traveller, who heard it from a native of Sitka. "In the early days of Indian life there lived a young man who was a good hunter, and he had a very pretty young wife and a son, both of whom filled his heart with love. Their lives were happy as the flowers' until one day the wife, while gathering wood in the forest, met the son of the chief, with whom she fell in love at the first glance. After this she met him every night by appointment on the seashore or in the woods. As days went on she feigned sickness, and calling her husband to her side, told him that she saw the spirits of her old friends coming to take her away, and that soon she would die and leave him, but made him promise not to burn her, but to put her body in a large box and place it in the gravehouse. That day she apparently died, when her last wish was carried out, and she was deposited in the small gravehouse in rear of the house. Night came on, and while the great feast [that it is customary with the Tlingit to give in honor of the dead] was being celebrated the chief's son went to the grave and assisted her to escape, and led her to his father's house, where she lived with him as his wife, but known only to his family. During the daytime she remained within doors, going out only under the shelter of darkness.

"Many a winter evening the lonely hunter, sitting in his house with his little boy, would think about his dead wife, and all his heart would break out in tears. One day, returning from hunting and finding no fire, he sent his little boy into the chief's house to ask for some live coals to start his fire with. Upon entering the chief's house the little boy surprised his mother sitting by the fire. She saw him and immediately covered her face, but too late to prevent recognition.

The boy went home and told his father that he had seen his mother, but his father told him to be quiet. He, however, insisted upon it, so that in the end the father's suspicions were aroused, and in the evening he stole softly to the chief's house, and looking through a chink discovered his wife sitting with her lover by the fire.

"Upon returning home he sat down to think how best to avenge this great wrong, and concluded to possess himself of a witch spirit ; so the following night he took himself to the deadhouse and slept by a corpse, but the spirit did not come to him ; he next killed a dog, and skinning it, slept one night in its skin, but again failed. Then he took a dead shaman's skull from the deadhouse and used it to drink out of, and the next morning, going out, he suddenly fell down on the skull in a trance, and upon waking up the witch spirit had come to him, and he went home happy. Upon the coming of night he returned to the shamans' graves, and there met many spirits of men and lovely maidens who danced and played with him, and every night afterwards he visited them and learned more and more of witchcraft.

"After a while he took the bones of the dead shaman and made them into a necklace, which he put on. Then he killed a dog and made a blanket of its skin ; then he took two shaman skulls, and filling them with pebbles, made rattles of them [all of these articles are used by the shamans in cases of witchcraft]. He continued visiting the graves, associating with spirits and witches, and learned more and more daily, until he was able to fly, when he took the two skull rattles into his hands and flew to the chief's house. Upon reaching the smoke-hole he shook the rattles, and put every one in a sound sleep. Then he entered the house and saw his wife asleep in the arms of her lover. The next morning he went out and played ; the people came out of their houses and all said, 'We slept very sound last night.' He afterwards went out into the woods and cut a small pole, which he sharpened at one end to a fine point ; and the next night, when all were asleep, he flew down the smoke-hole of the chief's house and drove the sharpened stake through his faithless wife, killing her instantly, without noise. The next morning she was found dead, but no one knew who had killed her.

"Now the hunter determined to give the witch spirit to his little boy, so that he could work any charm. He took the hand of an old dead shaman and hung it around the child's neck, and the little boy fell down in a trance, and the witch spirit came to him ; then he went with his father every night to play with the spirits. The hunter now proposed to avenge himself on the chief's son. He instructed his little boy to watch his enemy and to secure his spittle, cut off a piece of his blanket, or wipe up his tracks ; and with this and other

material he made a small human figure, which he put inside a dead shaman, and as the image rotted, so sickness came to the chief's son, and as the image decayed, so the chief's son grew weaker and weaker until death came upon him. Then the hunter initiated his family into the mysteries of witchcraft, and it was thus that the witches originated."

There are quite a number of objects in the collection which refer to this class of spirits, whom Emmons calls witches. There are several stone amulets which are used as a protection from witches. One of these represents on one side an old man's head, on the other a grouse eating a worm, called *Slusk*, which is found on the mainland. "The holes in this amulet are used to put in what is picked from the teeth, so that witches will not get hold of it to bring destruction to the person."

An ivory charm, taken from a shaman's dancing robe, represents a witch tied up. Emmons explains this as follows: "The whole system of shaman's practice consists in the exorcising the evil spirits which occupied space everywhere and entered into animals and people. The person whom the shaman accuses of possessing the witch spirit which has entered the sick is seized by him, tied up, and starved until a confession is made, when he is driven into salt water, where the witch spirit is expelled; and then the sick man must get well, but the witch is ever afterward looked upon with distrust. Should he, however, refuse to make a confession, he is allowed to starve to death, or may be placed on shore at the limit of low tide, and, being bound, is drowned as the water rises."

The shamans, as well as ordinary men, wear small figures which serve as their guardsmen from mischief done by the witches. Regarding one of these, Lieutenant Emmons remarks that "it is supposed to taste all the water the possessor drinks; for witches and evil spirits often come to one in water, and the figure tells the owner of any approaching danger."

While these figures are used as a protection against evil, another class of charms is used for detecting and conquering hostile beings. These have mostly the shape of knives, carved to represent the spirits possessed by the shaman. "These spirits are supposed to appear to him in his dreams and trances, and after once coming acknowledge the man's mastery ever after. They are removed at will and obedient to his command. They guard him from hostile spirits or give him information of his enemies. In dances the shaman uses these knives to fight with his invisible opponent, or in the case of one bewitched to learn who possesses the witch spirit." One of these knives represents a crane, a mountain goat, a cuttle-fish, the fabulous kushtaka, small spirits (*yēk*), and a land otter. The kush-

taka, as is well known, are the spirits of the drowned, who assume the shape of otters. Another of these knives, which was purchased by Emmons, was, according to his notes, highly valued by the Chilkat to whom it belonged, and who objected greatly to parting with it. It is made of walrus ivory, which is obtained by barter from the Eskimo of the Peninsula of Alaska. It was believed to possess the power of divination to point out witches as well as to subdue spirits, and represents a crane.

Certain amulets are used by the Tlingit to protect the bodies of shamans. One of these, which is in the collection, was taken from a grave, where it had been placed at the head of a corpse to guard it from hostile powers. "His hands, in each of which he held a knife, were in the act of striking. A wolf's head, coming out of the breast of the figure, and bears' heads, one on each knee, represent spirits at the command of the little guardsman, who is standing on a seal, which indicates that he does not walk, but glides through space noiselessly. The image was considered so powerful that none of the Tlingit dared to approach it."

It has long been known that the shamans, according to the belief of the Tlingit, must acquire their knowledge of the mysteries of shamanism by tearing out the tongues of an otter, an eagle, and several other animals. Emmons adds to this that in the operation of tearing out the tongue they must use a bundle of twigs, done up uniformly and strung together with cord of spruce roots. This bundle is used for catching the blood that flows from the otter's tongue. Those twigs which had not come into contact with the blood were taken out. Sometimes a piece or the whole of the tongue is wrapped in those bundles and, in cases of great emergency, worn by the shamans round the neck to endow them with great power over spirits. Another of these bundles contains an eagle's talons.

Among the medicine-man's implements the following may be of interest. There is a small image representing a spirit (*yēk*). It is taken in the hand, held towards the fire, and heated. Then it is rubbed against the affected part or left with the patient.

The following custom, which was recorded among the Sitkakoan, is very remarkable. The collector found a small box containing human excrements in the woods, and was given the following information in regard to this object: "When a woman wishes to have a son who shall be a great chief, she will lay in wait in the woods for some powerful chief and persuade him to satisfy her desire. Then, if she gives birth to a son later, the first excrements of the child are preserved in a box and deposited in the woods or on the rocks. By such means, it is believed, he will grow up strong and gain great power."

Finally, we will give the legend referring to the invention of rattles, which Lieutenant Emmons heard at Sitka. "Once upon a time an old man with his nephew lived in the Nass River country. His nephew was idle and worthless, and would spend his days sleeping and sitting about. At last the uncle became provoked. He put a stone axe in his nephew's hand, and sent him out into the woods to cut down some firewood. The boy obeyed, and having selected a large tree, felled it, and began splitting it up; when in the centre he discovered a box, and upon opening it found a rattle, waistcoat, and other dancing implements. These he took back to the old man, who immediately put them into use, and from this all rattles were copied."

It will be seen from these brief remarks that the collection embodies a vast amount of new information regarding the folk-lore and customs of the Tlingit, and we wish through these lines to call the attention of ethnologists to the rich source of information laid open to them.

F. B.